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[A] Introduction

[B] Why Witches? Setting the Scene

In her editorial to the first issue of the French journal Sorcières: Les femmes vivent [Witches: Women live] (1976),¹ Xavière Gauthier explained the choice of the journal's title: witches dance, sing, they steal/fly [elles volent], and have only historically appeared ugly and wicked because they 'pose a real danger to phallogocentric society' (Gauthier, 1981, pp. 199-203). Crucially, witches were announced to be back and ready to avenge the repression of their predecessors. Marginalised, oppressed and victimised but also representing the repressed underbelly of a rationalist and sexist – 'phallogocentric'² – order of things, witches emerged as a sorely needed bridge between social oppression and symbolic repression. Oppressed and marginalised groups have long had an affinity for the cultural unconscious and an interest in mining it; conversely, the culturally repressed is often perceived as threatening and socially subversive. It is therefore not surprising that Gauthier and the editorial board of Sorcières were not alone in symbolically deploying the figure of the witch as a specifically feminist revolutionary. In The Newly Born Woman, Catherine Clément singled out the witch as an emblem of emergent feminist womanhood, without, however, being blind to its risks: out of the bundle of contradictions, bittersweet transgressions, imposed sufferings and precarious victories with which every culture's imaginary space of otherness is fraught, Clément urged her readers to keep 'the witch's broom, her taking off, her being swept away, her taking flight' (Clément and Cixous, 1986, p. 57). In 'The Laugh of the Medusa', Hélène Cixous' manifesto of feminine writing, it is not specifically the figure of the sorceress that is evoked but the powerful metaphor of the return of the repressed, already underlying the deployments of the sorceress by Gauthier and Clément. The Greek mythical monster Medusa, famously discussed by Freud in reference to the castration complex, became a cipher for intrepid femininity that made 'an explosive, utterly destructive, staggering return' (Cixous, 1976b, p. 886, emphasis in the original). Feminine writing takes place when the culturally repressed return with a vengeance, when the long censored and (presumed) impossible erupts into language and the world, throwing it into 'chaosmos' (ibid., p. 888). Through the seventies and for the duration of the feminist second wave, a networked, collaborative manifesto appears to have been woven across a growing body of theoretical writing as well as visual art practices, in which witches and female monsters are not merely reclaimed but reimaged as symbols of resistance and even revolutionary agents.

Meanwhile, another network of formally trained and untrained women artists was emerging across England and, increasingly, internationally. In 1976, the year of the first publication of Sorcières and of the English translation of Cixous' call to feminine writing in Signs (1976b), a feminist postal art project was gathering pace through a growing number of participants and touring exhibitions. The Women's Postal Art Event (1975-1977) and its installations under the titles Feministo: Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman and Portrait of the Artist as a Housewife (ICA, 1977), called into question the implicitly gendered hierarchy between art and craft by employing craft techniques, traditionally passed on from one generation of women to the next and now repurposed for a feminist art project inspired by consciousness raising (Elinor et al, 1987; Goodall, 1987; Walker, 1980; Kokoli, 2004).³ In addition to crocheting, quilting and embroidery, simple DIY techniques like papier-mâché and collage were used to level the playing field between participants regardless of training or

access to art supplies and designated studios. Most of the resulting works, small and cheap to post, turned the connotations of feminine craft on its head, aggressively debunking domesticity as an oppressive ideal founded on a patriarchal division of labour. In its more elaborate installations, a mock-domestic set up was adopted for greater effect, including a kitchen and bedroom but also a memory room and a rape room, in which Kate Walker's Rape Cup and Saucer was displayed, an obvious homage to Meret Oppenheim's Fur Cup and Saucer, lined with newspaper clippings reporting incidents of sexual assault. Amputated female body parts were presented in chocolate boxes (Kate Walker), a full English breakfast was offered with burnt egg, as small, perhaps unconscious protest (Su Richardson), while a series of crocheted sandwiches (Richardson), arranged on a cutting board next to a load of real bread did not make packed lunches but eloquent statements about the experience of mothers and housewives. Feministo's treacherous home installations were not merely anti-domestic but rather brought to light the suppressed discontents, silences, inequalities and even violence on which domesticity is founded.

This book is neither about witches specifically, nor artistic indictments of domesticity but rather focuses on an important dimension that the textual and visual practices outlined above have in common: the return of the repressed. Its starting point is the deliberate unsettling quality that many cultural artefacts informed by feminism continue to possess. The book proposes the term 'feminist uncanny' to best describe this quality, while also pointing at a critical encounter in both senses of the word, crucial and founded in critical discourse: the fraught but fertile relationship between feminism and the uncanny and, by extension, Freudian psychoanalysis. This relationship will be explored in both critical texts and in examples of feminist art practice.

[B] Feminism and the Uncanny

In the uncanny, which Freud famously described as the disturbing fallout of the return of the repressed, feminism discovered an unexpected ally in its attempt to forge subversive countercultural strategies, to claim a place in the canons of creative practice and critical theory, and to revolutionise them in doing so. Such strategies involve a process of defamiliarisation, namely of uncovering the strangeness of what is assumed to be known, established or ordinary, which is tinged with an indictment of the division between the familiar and the unfamiliar in the first place, a division that is viewed as intrinsically hierarchical and imbued in the politics of power. In the context of the discipline of art history, divisions between the known (also assumed to be worth knowing), and the unknown (assumed to be minor, marginal, of lesser importance, or less representative of dominant tendencies, movements, traditions) are both the reflection and the vehicle of authoritative value judgements. Insidiously, such divisions filter down to mainstream, lay understandings of art, history, and value, and get entrenched, validated and naturalised through repetition. Hence among the earliest tasks of feminist art history has been the interrogation of the criteria operating within and through the discipline. Linda Nochlin's question 'Why Have There Not Been Great Women Artists?' (1989 [1971]) was met with a multitude of answers, ranging from the rediscovery of forgotten, marginalised or underrated women artists and traditions of female collective and anonymous cultural production, to the systematic unmaking of the implicitly gendered, classed and racialised construct of the solitary artistic genius. Either way, ignorance was stripped of its claim to innocence. In the exhibition catalogue of the ICA exhibition About Time (1980), Lynn MacRitchie simultaneously underlines the timeliness of this women-only group show and acknowledges that it is 'a mere drop from the pool available. Thus the unfamiliarity of work by women artists does not lie in its rarity. It lies in its suppression' (MacRitchie cited in Parker and Pollock, 1987, p. 39). If the strange bears the

mark of its suppression, infecting the familiar with unsettling unfamiliarity can be a righteous turning of the tables, a justified act of overdue retribution.

The fairly straightforward proposition that feminism found in the uncanny an apt subversive strategy is not without its caveats. On the one hand, feminism and psychoanalysis do not always make a happy pairing: as with Marxism, their relationship has been troubled as well as productive.⁴ On the other hand, the uncanny is among the most flawed and flickering critical formulations, already mutating within Freud's writings, which do not fully acknowledge previous attempts to pin it down, and becoming increasingly elusive in theoretical and practice-led reworkings thereafter. In acknowledgement of such issues, this book approaches the uncanny not merely as subversive strategy but as a cipher of the collaboration between feminism and the theoretical apparatus of psychoanalysis, a collaboration that is inherently compromised and compromising despite notable accomplishments. The uncanny makes ideal vehicle for an arrangement marked by ambivalence and acts as a constant reminder that, even though feminism ended up revitalising psychoanalysis through their critical encounter, the two are never quite at home with one another. 'In every alternative practice, every elaboration in the other manner, including the present one, the one you are reading, un peu de mal, a bit of difficulty, a bit of maleness, returns' (Gallop, 1982, p. 55).⁵ One of the key advantages that psychoanalysis presents to feminism is not to minimise or contain this difficulty (on the contrary, in many respects it amplifies it) but rather to foster a fearless self-reflective capacity for acknowledging and working through it. Conversely, feminist thought has revolutionised psychoanalysis in too many ways to fully acknowledge here, from Melanie Klein's emphasis on pre-Oedipal development and the importance of the maternal function (Jacobus, 1995; Kristeva, 2001), to Bracha Ettinger's sustained attack on binaries and specifically the subjectifying/ objectifying logic of the Lacanian gaze (Pollock, 2006; Ettinger, 2004). Rather than embracing the transformative potential of such radical revisions, this book is mired on the murky terrain of the close, adversarial dialogue between second-wave feminism and the fathers of psychoanalysis, suggesting that dangerous encounters can often be the most serendipitous. Rather than the model of a transformative overhaul, I am more interested in the minor mode of 'rhetorical catachresis' (Lyon, 1999, p. 198), a tactical misprision of master discourses by those excluded from and/or misrepresented by them.⁶ Feminist catachresis, partly concurrent with the Situationist détournement, is an established form of feminist practice albeit not usually identified by name. In art informed by feminism, 'deflection, diversion, rerouting, distortion, misuse, misappropriation, hijacking, or otherwise turning something aside from its normal course or purpose' (Knabb, 2006) have all organically and/or programmatically emerged as prominent creative and political strategies, from the mutually subversive mixing of women's craft and oil painting in Faith Ringgold's quilted canvases to the mock documents of The Fae Richards Photo Archive by Zoe Leonard, in which documentary and archival conventions are mimicked as an indictment for the gaps and silences in real archives and histories. It is my contention in this book that most feminist encounters with Freudian psychoanalysis are inherently and profoundly catachrestic, particularly since Lacan's revisions of Freud were not only eventually elevated to the highest echelons of critical theory, but have also been abused as academic litmus tests, thanks to their presumed opacity. In Reading Lacan (1987), Jane Gallop not only sidesteps but challenges the orthodoxy of many of Lacan's followers, making the audacious revelation that her approach to the material under consideration was at once openly feminist and far from masterful, an admission that caused much trouble in the peer-review process of her book. Instead of intellectual inadequacy, of which she was accused, relinquishing 'the usual position of command' suggests a reflectively feminist attitude to the making and circulation of ideas:

Though I have worked long and hard at Lacan's text and with the various commentaries upon it, rather than present my mastery I am interested in getting at those places where someone who generally knows the text well still finds herself in a position of difficulty. [...] My assumption of my inadequacy and my attempt to read from that position are thus, to my mind, both Lacanian and feminist. (Gallop, 1987, pp. 19-20)

In my own attempt to stave off orthodoxies (Freudian, Lacanian, feminist), I have assumed not only the openness to interpretation and reinterpretation of all the texts with which I engage, both written and visual, theory and art, but also the inherent instability of their signification and significance, as well as accepting the specificity and limitations of my own perspective. I share Gallop's hope that the meeting of feminism and psychoanalysis 'can bring each other to its most radical potential' (Gallop, 1982, p. xii). Over three decades later, I would venture further to argue that this hope has been realised in multiple forms and platforms. Significantly, while this encounter was originally hosted in the realms of critical theory and literature (and the many hybrid texts in-between), it gradually migrated to feminist approaches to visual art and culture, where it has taken roots and continues to flourish (Apter, 2006, p. 329).

The book is loosely divided into two parts, the first of which examines the relationship between feminism and the uncanny focusing on theoretical texts, while the second approaches it in light of pertinent examples of feminist visual art practice. Although the distinction between theory and practice is questionable at best (after all, practice implicitly proposes its own theories, and theory can only be articulated through different types of practice), each part of the book operates differently. The first two chapters introduce the multiple definitions of the uncanny, as slippery concept, subversive textual/artistic strategy, and cipher for the ambivalent engagement of feminism and the theories it drew on and transformed. Chapters 3-6 are thematically organised around aggressively defamiliarised premises and platforms, and consist of new readings of prominent works as well as an engagement with less well researched art projects.

[C] Art and Feminism: A Disclaimer

For the purposes of this book, feminism refers not only to the historical Women's Liberation Movement, a.k.a. second-wave feminism, but also to contemporaneous and subsequent movements, individuals and practices that have been significantly informed by the changes brought about by feminist political and cultural activity. A positive identification of the artists under consideration with feminism is not essential as long as the impact of feminist theory and practice on their practice is evident. Most art practice under consideration spans the 1970s and 1980s, although later works are also included if they represent the culmination of processes that began earlier. In the case of the theory under discussion, it can be more straight-forwardly placed at the moment of the tremendously productive meeting between psychoanalysis, post-structuralism and deconstruction that erupted in the early 1970s. Jacques Lacan's reinterpretation of canonical psychoanalytic texts was not limited to an insistence on the workings of language within them, nor the crucial role of the symbolic in the formation and definition of the subject, both revolutionary in themselves: 'the crux of Lacan's reading of Freud is that Freud's discovery of repression was itself necessarily and constantly threatened with being repressed' (Mehlman, 1972, p. 5). In other words, as the textuality of psychoanalytic writing was restored and foregrounded, psychoanalytic ideas were subjected to (psycho)analytic scrutiny more than ever before. The return to Freud in the 1970s, through Lacan, but also through Jean Laplanche, Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray, among others, was singularly revisionist, self-reflective, and subversive from within.

Regarding feminism's waves (or lack thereof), it would be tempting to argue for an irreducibly diverse continuum of presence since the late 1960s, radically varied but at the same time connected in its shared multiplicity. Yet the existence of growing feminist legacies, however diverse, as well as the commitment to respond to current cultural and political contexts means that some differentiation is necessary. Writing in the mid-1980s, Dale Spender argues that there are important distinctions to be drawn even within the second wave, at the point in which feminism emerged as a body of knowledge as well as a political and activist practice:

[...] coming to know through books is a qualitatively different experience from coming to know through the collective and creative process of consciousness-raising. The existence of a body of knowledge invariably means that knowing feminism is not the same for the 'second generation' of women in the contemporary movement, who must first learn before they can introduce their personal insights, and for whom there is an increased chance that they will be 'wrong' in a way that would have been extremely rare for the 'first generation' [of the late 1960s and early 1970s]. (Spender, 1985, p. 121)

An academic habit has recently emerged of questioning the use of feminist periodisations for many good reasons, from challenging the illusion of linear progress, to dodging the dangerous reduction of feminist debates into inter-generational conflict, and, perhaps more abstractly, because the waves may 'stifle the writing of the kind of complex historical genealogy of feminisms' (McRobbie, 2009, p. 156). Although the case against the waves is often persuasive, their rejection masks the privilege of being already fluent in the nuances of feminist critical idioms and practices, and knowledgeable enough of their histories to challenge and deconstruct them. The generalisations that neat periodisations both presume and perpetuate can be substantially enabling to those new to feminism and trying to get to grips with its rich history, if only as a first step on a hopefully long journey. After all, one can only break the rules that one already knows.

Returning to – and thereby outlining – feminist traditions in art and theory has emerged a big feminist issue over the past decade. Two major survey exhibitions, elles@pompidou, Pompidou Centre, Paris, and Rebelle: Art and Feminism, Museum voor Moderne Kunst, Arnhem (both 2009), were predated by an explosion of events, exhibitions and publications in 2007 that sought to address the pasts and futures of feminism in visual art, including notably the MoMA symposium The Feminist Future: Theory and Practice in the Visual Arts, the exhibition WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution (Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and travelling), curated by Cornelia Butler, Global Feminisms, curated by Maura Reilly and Linda Nochlin, in celebration of the opening of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art in the Brooklyn Museum, NYC, and Kiss Kiss Bang Bang: 45 Years of Art and Feminism, curated by Xavier Arakistain, Bilbao Fine Arts Museum.⁷ The year before saw the opening of It's Time for Action (There's No Option): About Feminism, curated by Heike Munder, at the Migros Museum of Contemporary Art, Zurich. The exhibition Konstfeminism [Art Feminism—Strategies and Consequences in Sweden from the 1970s to the Present] opened in Sweden in 2005, while in 2006 I organised, at the University of Sussex, the one-day conference Difference Reframed: Reflections on Art and Feminism, with a keynote by Griselda Pollock and presentations by emergent artists and art historians.⁸ More important even than the diverse content and clashing assumptions of this 'revival' was that it happened, and that it responded to an emergent demand for a celebration of art in feminism and feminism in art, a call for a preservation of and ongoing reflection on the heritage of the second wave and a continuation

of feminist practices in art and art writing. Ultimately, it was the search for ‘feminist models’ and enabling continuities that powered this revival. Katy Deepwell suggests that one of the principle continuities has been a commitment to asking similar, always difficult questions both of art history and of contemporary art about the visibility of women’s practice, the re-evaluation of their representation in art history and criticism, and the representation of gender broadly defined (Deepwell, 2007, pp. 198-199). The most important thing that remains constant, despite its on-going transformation, is feminism itself (p. 208). And it is feminism’s commitment to articulating, nurturing and ever-complicating difference that guarantees its coherence through change.

The artists and artworks under consideration have been selected through a variety of processes and for different reasons. Like many feminist writers, I have experienced the anxiety of influence in reverse, constantly worrying about the cultural producers, texts, theories and practices that I have failed to acknowledge, adequately or at all. It would be disingenuous to suggest that serendipity, the opportunity to visit some archives and not others, personal taste and even personal relationships did not inform the selection. The evident Anglo-American bias (including ‘French theory’, which is to a large degree an Anglo-American invention), of both my scholarly and artistic references may not be excused, but can be explained by the fact that I came to know most of the artists under consideration through English-language books, and mostly through feminist art historical writing, which has only recently begun to address its Eurocentricity in earnest, rather than in exhibition or on studio visits, although in most cases first-hand experience followed the initial mediated encounter. More importantly, this book contributes to feminist knowledge by reviewing and revising (seemingly) familiar ground, rather than by introducing heretofore neglected and/or geopolitically marginalised theory and practice. In doing so, it adheres to one of the tenets of the uncanny that situates the unknown and partially unknowable in the dark heart of the familiar. I have almost deliberately steered clear of artworks which explicitly reference the uncanny (or the related concepts of the abject and the – base –sublime) in their titles or texts, or which would be visually immediately identifiable as being connected to such concepts. On the one hand, I want to suggest that the uncanny permeates, in one way or another, all practice informed by feminism; on the other, I have often felt that artworks that announce themselves as uncanny aren’t that uncanny after all. I hope that if the feminist uncanny has been as important and pervasive a concept and strategy as I argue here, then any insights coming out of this book could be transferred beyond its pages to different artworks, texts, and debates. Going further, I aspire to demonstrate that the feminist uncanny, as an improper concept and cluster of strategies, is too wide-spread, diverse, and protean to be exhausted in any single monograph.

[C] (Dis)identifications

It has become increasingly common to question feminism’s reference to ‘women’ as its principle if not exclusive constituency, particularly for students of feminism and/or those who, regardless of age, have only recently become involved. This is hardly a new issue in feminist thought and activism. Through a Foucauldian genealogical investigation into the category of ‘women’, Denise Riley not only charts its important transformations in and beyond feminist movements but also argues that the changeability and indeterminacy of this category needs to continue to be fully acknowledged in any current and future feminist thought (2003). Following Judith Butler, Alison Stone offers an alternative to ‘strategic essentialism’ (the simultaneous acceptance that ‘women’ is an inadequate and dangerously unifying descriptor and the recognition that it can also be an enabling identification towards common political action), in her conception of ‘women as genealogy’:

[...] every cultural construction of femininity takes over and reinterprets pre-existing constructions, themselves the precipitates of still earlier layers of reinterpretation, so that all these constructions form overlapping chains. [...] Thus, although women do not form a unity, they are nevertheless assembled through their location within this history [...] amenable to collective mobilisation on a coalition basis (Stone, 2007, pp. 26-27).

It is true that many of the feminist texts and documents I have read do not appear to acknowledge gender positions beyond the binary of femininity and masculinity. However, I am not convinced that this makes them or their writers retroactively heteronormative, essentialist, or transphobic. It is up to contemporary feminists and their allies to reinterpret past texts, documents, and images and thus imbricate themselves in the overlapping chains that Stone mentions above. I do not have to turn to philosophical (Moi, 2001) nor social theoretical (Gunnarsson, 2011) defences of the category of 'women' to give myself permission to continue to use the term and even, with some reservations, to identify with it. The most convincing and perhaps simplest defence of keeping the term in circulation (rather than on a pedestal) comes from the practice of feminist art history. Writing in the mid-1990s, when feminism seemed 'so well established, maybe even old hat' (Wagner, 1996, p. 4), Anne Wagner explains why she continues to write on artists who are women and to use the category of the 'woman artist'. In social and cultural contexts 'woman' continues to signify and resonate, as in art, whether it is actively claimed as an identification, avoided or externally imposed. Conversely, to be a 'woman artist' hasn't been nor will it ever be the whole story: none of Wagner's chosen artists represents 'women', let alone 'Woman'; 'just as images are not transparent to social identity (or anything else), neither are people' (Wagner, 1996, p. 26).

[C] Which Psychoanalysis (what theory?): Some Parameters and Preliminary Observations
It is important to point out that in the 1970s, the 'formative years' of the feminisms under consideration, psychoanalysis and Freud's writings in particular enjoyed a different status than they do today. Although their popularity may still be debatable, the idea that they formed part of popular culture at the time isn't. The Pelican Freud Library (later Penguin Freud Library), based on the Standard Edition by James Strachey but omitting texts deemed of little interest to the general public, such as papers on technical aspects of the psychoanalytic method and early writings on neurology, was organised in fifteen thematic anthologies. Sometimes compared to a psychoanalytic Vulgate, the Pelican/Penguin Freud Library was widely available in bookshops and larger news agents alike across Britain in the 1970s. The idea of being able to buy some Freud at a train station or an airport may seem surprising to the contemporary reader, especially if she, like me, has a vague or no recollection of the 1970s, but it is necessary to keep in mind when engaging with feminist theory and art practice whose foundations lie in that cultural context. Freud was considered to be both a captivating and a politically important read, emphatically not reserved for the academically-minded. Therefore, when Laura Mulvey (whose influential contributions to the academic journal Screen and feminist magazines such as Spare Rib are assumed to be emblematic of second-wave's take on psychoanalytic theory) describes her own involvement with psychoanalysis as pop-Freudian, it is not out of false modesty but in recognition that, in the 1970s, Freud himself was pop.

Juliet Mitchell's founding text Psychoanalysis and Feminism (1974), also published by Pelican/Penguin drove this point home for me first and foremost, when I first read it twenty-five years after its original publication. Mitchell and her publishers clearly expected of her readership a working knowledge of some key texts by Freud as well as the work of

anti-psychiatry founder R. D. Laing, Wilhelm Reich and feminist detractors of psychoanalysis, including Kate Millett and Shulamith Firestone. Psychoanalysis and Feminism unfolds as a series of carefully argued theses on the open-endedness of Freudian thought on matters of gender and sexuality and its value in articulating the ideological and psychological workings of patriarchy and the oppression of women (Part One), followed by a detailed discussion of the relationship between Freudian psychoanalysis and ‘radical psychotherapy’, represented by Reich and Laing (Part Two: I) and of ‘Feminism and Freud’ (Part Two: II). Mitchell demonstrates how feminist attacks on a ‘debased Freudianism’ by Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, Eva Figes, Germaine Greer, Shulamith Firestone and Kate Millett have been politically ‘necessary’ (Mitchell, 1974, p. 356) but have not helped advance an understanding of the implications of patriarchy for women and men alike. An acknowledgement of the particular workings of the unconscious and an attention to Freud’s textuality are essential in the productive – that is to say, revolutionary – deployments of psychoanalysis in the interests of feminism. They are also, incidentally, essential in freeing Freud of his imposed ‘debasement’. In her effort to restore the complexity of Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Mitchell suggests that the perceived and much maligned ‘dualism of drives’, the death drive and the sexual drive, ‘does not persist even at the moment of its inception’, since the two are ‘in constant battle’, or rather in a ‘dialectical relationship’, as well as infinitely mutable and thus likely to produce unforeseen changes in their dynamics as they attach to one another in shifting transformations (Mitchell, 1974, p. 390). Mitchell’s ambition for feminism, psychoanalysis and their interface is no less than to awaken this vibrant and generative ambiguity and exploit it not only for the analysis of the world as it is but towards effecting change. It is this feminist view on psychoanalysis, which recognises that the texts reveal more than its author dared to acknowledge, that both inspires and shapes this book. In the feminist context, the vibrant and generative ambiguity of the text is not allowed to flounder in its own endlessly self-deferring indeterminacy, as in deconstruction, but often gets harnessed in polemics, subverted in consciousness-raising, revisited in art practice, experimented with and recycled, in various forms and to different ends, time and again.

The psychoanalytic traditions evoked in this book are very closely tied to Freud and his published works. Lacan, who unequivocally declared himself a Freudian, also makes constant reference to Freud’s texts and brings to them an attention to language broadly defined, which is shared by feminist writers and artists, regardless of whether they directly cite Lacan’s work. After all, Lacan and self-declared Lacanians do not hold the exclusive rights of mining Freud’s textuality, and it would be hard to deny that paying attention to the silences and ambiguities of texts and images has been an intrinsically feminist issue. It is therefore thanks to a shared interest in cultural silences, rather than the mere influence of the master on the movement, that the meeting between feminism and Lacan’s work has been such a productive one, and deeply enriching of the longer-standing ambivalent relationship between feminism and Freud. Introducing a selection of Lacan’s work on sexuality, Jacqueline Rose maintains its relevance to feminism for outlining the psycho-cultural conditions by which ‘woman’ is assigned ‘a definition in which she is simultaneously symptom and myth’ (Mitchell and Rose, 1982, p. 57)

Reading second-wave feminist theory in the present comes with the added bonus of catching glimpses of its primary materials. For instance, Judith Williamson’s Decoding Advertisements (1978) serves as an invaluable introduction to the casual sexism of mainstream visual culture of the 1970s in the UK and, to some degree, in Northern Europe and North America, as well as a reminder of the currency of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, semiotics, and structuralist and post-structuralist theory. Although such required background knowledge has since largely shrunk back into academia, it is essential to

keep in mind that, thanks to the intellectual underpinnings of feminist and New Left activism and the emphasis on the habit of reading among those who considered themselves to be politically engaged, the conceptual and analytical frameworks of the artworks and texts under consideration in this book had a different cultural capital at the time of their production: both higher, because of the perceived timeliness, relevance and applicability of such frameworks to everyday life; and lower, because they weren't confined to academic settings.

After much consideration I decided to stick to Strachey's translations as they were published in the slightly updated Penguin Freud Library editions of the 1990s, which are those that introduced me to the most of Freud's work. Where necessary I refer to the Standard Edition for texts not included in the Penguin Library. Despite the many advantages of the new translations of Freud's works in the New Penguin Freud expertly edited by Adam Phillips, including, for instance, the elimination of many errors and oversimplifications in Strachey's original translations for the standard edition, I decided to stick to the Penguin Freud Library, as it is this which was read and is cited by the English-speaking writers with whom I engage. Revisiting Freud's texts in their new translations from a feminist perspective would make a potentially worthwhile project, which however falls outside the scope of this book.

[B] Theory and/as Practice, Practice and/as Theory: Chapter Summaries

Josh Lyman: 'The art around here scares the hell out of me.'

Amy Gardner: 'That's what it's supposed to do.'⁹

The first two chapters consist of an examination of the common ground between the uncanny and femininity, not only because Freud clearly positioned femininity on the side of castration, the unspeakable and death but because both remained equally fascinating and mystifying in Freud's work. In addition to key texts by Freud (e.g. 'The Tale of the Three Caskets' and 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle'), Chapter 1: 'The Uncanny Feminine' considers relevant formulations by Jacques Lacan and Jean Laplanche and their relationship with theories of femininity. Chapter 2: 'The Feminist Uncanny' provides an overview of feminist scholarship on the uncanny, by writers including Hélène Cixous, Jane Marie Todd and Sarah Kofman. Freud's eponymous essay has inspired a multitude of critiques and revisionist accounts that throw into relief the troubling contradictions at the heart of feminism's engagement with psychoanalysis. The specificity of my approach will be contextualised within and against a range of influential feminist concepts, including Julia Kristeva's 'abject', Barbara Creed's 'monstrous feminine', and Mary Russo's the 'female grotesque', each of which evokes distinct cultural and critical practices. While mostly engaging with 'theory', the first two chapters also chart the discursive transformations of texts and intertextual relationships that have been repeatedly interpreted, debated, contested and, ultimately, activated in ways that draw attention to their status as (textual) practice.

Chapter 3: 'Moving sideways and other dead metaphors: Susan Hiller's Paraconceptualism' introduces the part of the book that deals more directly with art practice. Committed to a ceaseless excavation of the cultural unconscious, Hiller's oeuvre sits awkwardly within conceptualism for refusing to disavow visual pleasure and, even more importantly, for not succumbing to the inherent rationalism of much historical conceptualist practice. Just sideways of conceptualism and neighbouring the paranormal, a devalued site of culture where women and the feminine have been conversely privileged, Hiller's 'paraconceptualism' opens up a hybrid field of radical ambiguity where neither conceptualism nor the paranormal are left intact: the prefix 'para-' allows in a force of contamination through a proximity so great that it threatens the soundness of all boundaries.

This chapter includes critical readings of the automatic writing work Sisters of Menon (1972; 1979), the video installation Belshazzar's Feast (1983) and the short film and etchings of The Last Silent Movie (2007).

In Chapter 4: 'Squats and Evictions: The Uncanny as Unhomely', the uncanny (das Unheimliche) is translated verbatim as unhomely and restored to its literal meaning. Domesticity and the sexual division of labour were not only major issues in feminist activism and political debates but were also tackled in a range of feminist practices, including visual art. Installation has been used strategically and subversively to recreate domestic environments from the perspective of feminist dissent, overhauled and made uncanny to reveal that, for the home-maker, the home has always been marked by profound ambivalence. The chapter is principally devoted to a relatively unknown British postal art project and travelling installation, the aforementioned Feministo (1975-77), but also tackles some of the cultural and philosophical supports of the conflation between femininity and domesticity, notably in the work of Emmanuel Levinas.

Food preparation and the social potential of communing over a shared meal are interrogated through a series of works that target familiar genres, attitudes and activities. Chapter 5: 'Dinner Parties: Eating Out, Coming Together' examines some of the ways in which canonical representations of the Last Supper are evoked and disrupted in Mary Beth Edelson's collage poster Some Living American Women Artists/Last Supper (1972), a wishful representation of women artists in positions of power which they didn't in reality have, combined with a critique of the gender politics of organised religion. In her infamous The Dinner Party (1974-79), Judy Chicago celebrates iconic female figures by portraying them as table settings, the implications of which have barely been addressed in relevant critical writing. The chapter also explores the strategies of menacing defamiliarisation in Martha Rosler's Semiotics of the Kitchen (1975), where a banal inventory of kitchen utensils gradually morphs into a performed threat of imminent violence, akin to Bobby Baker's only superficially light-hearted Kitchen Show (1991). Housewives with Steakknives (1985), an early painting by Sutapa Biswas, emerges as a visual manifesto for a feminist reclamation of the world starting with the kitchen, where the goddess Kali leads a revolution for artists/housewives and most of all, against their distinction.

Like feminist socio-cultural critique, art informed by feminism strove to uncover the patriarchal but also class- and 'race'-based underpinnings of the ideology of the nuclear family. Chapter 6 'Family Albums: World Making as Compensation' examines Jo Spence's funny and disturbing re-creations of the family album, in and beyond her involvement in phototherapy, which expose the performative nature of family roles. Probing, unsentimental and at least partially redemptive, The Only Woman (1985) by Marie Yates intersperses photographs from the artist's real family album with personal artefacts, news reports and cryptic textual fragments that teeter between the public and private; while addressing the mourning process of a daughter for her mother, the work also investigates the representational strategies and affective weight of family photographs and narratives. In Rosa Alice: Ordinary/ Extraordinary (1980-81), May Stevens contrasts History with family narratives by overlaying two life stories, that of revolutionary leader and writer Rosa Luxembourg with the artist's mother's life, marred by poverty and mental illness. Rather than labelling each life as either ordinary or extraordinary, the work invites viewers to consider the extraordinary in the ordinary and vice versa. Building on Abigail's Solomon-Godeau's concept of 'tactical haunting', namely 'the conjuring of historical absences and silences' (Solomon-Godeau, 2006, pp. 371-401), the chapter explores the process and ramifications of injecting history with the repressed stories of its oppressed. Faith Ringgold's series of narrative quilted canvases The French Collection (1991-93) narrates the life and work of a struggling African-American woman artist in Modernist Paris, fictional and yet not entirely

unlikely. Through her eyes, the gendered, racial and racist ambiguities of primitivism are teased out: referencing familiar paintings such as Sunflowers and Demoiselles d'Avignon, The French Collection renders the Modernist canon not exactly unrecognisable but rather contingent on the invisible contributions of its non-European others. In a similar vein, Zoe Leonard's The Fae Richards Photo Archive, a photographic biography of an fictional black lesbian actress whose life spans the 20th century, boldly claims the status of a historical document of a life story that would have been most likely confined to oblivion. Archives haunted by lacunae are also at the centre of Jeanne Duval: A Melodrama (2003) by Scots-Ghanaian artist and poet Maud Sulter, in which the process of researching the biography of Baudelaire's famous yet elusive partner leads to a retelling of established stories of art from the angrily defamiliarising perspective of the artist's muse.

The book closes with a double postscript that questions the ambiguity of endings, especially in the case of politically motivated cultural production, and the appropriateness of drawing conclusions. I propose that the feminist uncanny has been one of the most enduring legacies of the Women's Liberation Movement for contemporary artists. A wide range of feminist uncanny practices is evoked through a few representative works, from a spoof of early education books that biting comments on the role of contemporary art in the inculcation of middle class identity in Britain, to the continuation of unsettling deployments of craft that underline its subversive potential, and the radical reconsideration of the remit of psychoanalysis and its relationship to popular and even low culture. The second part of the postscript considers some revealing temporal complexities in the work of Monica Ross and proposes a seemingly self-defeating but serendipitously uncanny feminist strategy: angry melancholia.

¹ The first issue of bi-monthly Sorcières (1976-1981) had a drawing of a witch on a broomstick by Leonor Fini on the cover. Themes of the rest of its issues included: food, to prostitute oneself ('se prostituer'), smells, voice, blood (with an article on performance artist Gina Pane), art and women (on Lyubov Popova, Jacqueline Delaunay, Françoise Ménéges, et al. and topics including contemporary tapestry), theory, spaces and places, dolls, desires, death, and murdered nature ('la nature assassinée'). The final issue appropriately focuses on myths and nostalgia, and asks questions about the future of feminism as a movement as well as the fate of the feminist press. Although viewing itself as a typically 1970s project, Sorcières also asserts its enduring impact, not least on the lives of the women in its editorial collective (no. 24, p. 3).

² 'Phallogocentrism' was a widely used composite in feminist writing that drew on and contributed to deconstruction and the linguistic turn in psychoanalytic theory. Originally coined by Jacques Derrida, 'phallogocentrism' underlines the interdependence and complicity

between phallogentrism and logocentrism. While phallogentrism transforms sexual difference into a hierarchical binary that privileges men and masculinity, logocentrism ‘gives independent existence to concepts, which are no more than an effect of linguistic difference [...] find[ing] the guarantee of truth outside language’ (Belsey and Moore, 1997, p. 255). The term ‘phallogocentrism’ (Robinson, 2006) suggests that the gender asymmetry of phallogocentrism also pervades the field of vision (see also chapter 5 ‘Dinner Parties’).

³ Feministo is discussed in detail in Chapter 4: ‘Squats and Evictions: The Uncanny as Unhomely’.

⁴ The marriage metaphor is obviously – perhaps even ostentatiously – (hetero?)normative and its negative deployment in this context embraces and exploits its sexist and patriarchal foundations. The complex relationship between feminism and Marxism falls outside the scope of this book, although their ‘unhappy marriage’ evokes the foundational work of American economist Heidi Hartmann (1981) and the discussions that ensued (e.g. Sargent 1986; Bryson 2004). While Hartmann addresses Marxism principally as political economy, Rowbotham, Segal and Wainright (1979) reflect on the politics and practices of the British and international left more broadly, and suggest that to speak of a relationship between the two (feminism and the left) as though they were wholly distinct could be misleading. I think that the marriage metaphor is far more fitting for feminism and psychoanalysis, considering their common preoccupation with sexuality and family structures.

⁵ Gallop also discusses Mitchell and feminism’s engagement with Lacanian psychoanalysis in ‘Juliet Mitchell and the Human Sciences’ (1991).

⁶ For a discussion of the deconstructive and postcolonial meanings of ‘catachresis’, notably in Spivak and Derrida, see Morton, 2003, pp. 33-35.

⁷ I am not suggesting that these exhibitions and activities are similar in their assumptions, perspective and impact. See Robinson (2013) for a comparative discussion.

⁸ Kokoli (2008) is based on the papers presented at this conferences with some notable additions.

⁹ Conversation in the offices of the Women's Leadership Caucus. West Wing, Season 3, Episode 9: 'The Women of Kumar'. The evocation of this television series here should not be interpreted as an endorsement, particularly not of this particular neo-orientalist episode.